

Fond farewell

Retired Duxbury K9 Zar laid to rest after 10 years of service

BY GILLIAN SMITH, EDITOR

GILLIAN@DUXBURYCLIPPER.COM

Duxbury police officers said goodbye to a long-time colleague and friend on Friday, as retired canine Zar was laid to rest. After nearly 10 years on the Duxbury Police force, Zar retired in September 2013. In the past year and a half, his health has failed, and on Friday he was humanely put down at the Duxbury Animal Hospital on Depot Street. A police escort passed the Duxbury Police Department headquarters on the way to the hospital and subsequently traveled with Zar to an animal cemetery in Middleboro.

Police canine units from several neighboring communities attended a service at the cemetery.

"Zar had quite a storied career, highlighted by being one of the police dogs used in the manhunt for the Boston Marathon bombers in Watertown earlier in 2013," Police Chief Matthew Clancy said.

Continued on page 8

A fond farewell

Continued from page 1

On Friday, nearly two dozen police handlers attended the service in Middleborough with their dogs, as well as a large contingent of officers from the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council.

"It was quite a send off," Clancy said. "It was a huge show of admiration and respect both for Zar and his service, but also to Officer Ryan Cavicchi."

Zar and his partner, Duxbury K9 Officer Cavicchi, worked together on the force for nearly 10 years. The pair tracked down an attempted home invader at a fellow police officer's home, helped locate an abducted girl in Norwell and became one of the first highly trained pairs on the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council's SWAT team.

For a closer look at their time together, please enjoy this excerpt from an article written by Clipper intern Brennan Murray in 2013: "Since Zar was just a year- old pup, Cavicchi has been his constant companion, a pal as much as a partner, a brother as much as a trainer. In gunfire and by Cavicchi's bed in Kingston, the two have forged a bond the man and dog clichunderstates but also partly captures: yes, Cavicchi and Zar truly are the best of friends.

It was a pitch black May night when an attempted home invasion at a fellow officer's house in Duxbury prompted Cavicchi and Zar to deploy. A man with a gun presented himself at the door

before running off into the woods, armed and ready to fire at anyone who got in his way. With Zar tracking and Cavicchi closely behind, the two were hot on the trail of the fleeing suspect. That's when the first shot rang clear. "I heard the shot go off," Cavicchi said. "I could see the flash bang right in front of my face." Shortly after, a second deafening shot echoed. Just yards away from the armed suspect, Zar's instincts told him to finish the job, to disarm the man and keep his partner safe. But with no moonlight and poor visibility, Cavicchi's only option was to fall back with Zar and set up a perimeter away from the ambush. Later that evening, by Route 3, the convicted armed robber turned himself in to state police. "Zar did his job so well that he brought us right into the gunfire," Cavicchi said. "Without him we would have never found the guy. We would have never known who he was. Going through that together was probably the most rewarding thing." The trust in that moment, unlike Zar's incredible sense of smell, was not instinctive. Cavicchi and his partner have had almost a decade of training together and they've built an undeniable sense of mutual dependence. Though they cannot confirm it with words, Zar and Cavicchi know they have each other's back. Cavicchi said he has stacks and stacks of everything Zar has accomplished in his career. Four years ago in Canton, he tracked the scent of an Alzheimer's patient who had gone missing after leaving her facility. After an initially unsuccessful search, Zar's nose twitched on the way back to the cruiser.

Outside of the search grid, Zar pulled Cavicchi to a nearby creek. The elderly woman was there in the water, alive but nearly hypothermic.

"If it wasn't for Zar, she probably would have died," Cavicchi said. "To this day I still don't know how he picked her up."

Just before his retirement in 2013, Zar started spending some nights at home while Officer Cavicchi went to work. After retirement, he continued to live with the Cavicchis and helped to train a new dog, Delta.

Despite the large paws he has to fill, Clancy said Delta has spent the last year and a half on the force working hard.

"Delta did a fantastic job right out of the gate," Clancy said. While neither Delta nor Zar were drug dogs, they were both trained as tracking dogs and have been very successful."

Shortly after Delta became part of the Duxbury Police force and the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council SWAT team, he was sent to Boston for crowd control when the Red Sox won the World Series. "Delta was brand spanking new and he was right on the skirmish line," Clancy said. "He did his job in a military manner, which speaks well of Ryan's training." Clancy said the success of professionalism of Zar's work and the success Delta has had so far reflects Cavicchi's dedication to the force and to the K9 team. Clancy said the loss of Zar has been felt hard by the Cavhicci family.

"Ryan dedicated his heart and soul to Zar and their team," he said. "It's a tough loss for their family as well."

Upon Zar's retirement Officer Cavicchi said if there was one thing he would say to Zar, it would

be to tell him how much he cared for him.

“To be able to tell him that I really love him, like anyone else, that’s what I’d really want to say to him,” Cavicchi said. “I want him to really feel that he’s protected me more times than I’ll ever know and that I’ll always be there for him.”



Dozens of officers paid their respects to the late K9 officer.



Officers and their K9 partners from several surrounding towns attended the service for Zar.

Courtesy photo



A procession passed by the Duxbury Police Department on the way to the service for Zar.